

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended): A method, comprising:

operating a knowledge-base system configured to store a database containing answers to questions, the knowledge-base system being operatively coupled to a client computer;

enclosing a message identification number in a first email sent by the knowledge-base system that provides an answer to a question, wherein the message identification number uniquely identifies the first email;

receiving a message second email from the client computer that includes the message identification number from the first email;

determining the message second email from the client computer was a reply to a previously-generated message the first email from the knowledge-base system based on the message identification number contained in the second email; and

forwarding the message the second email from the client computer to a human representative in response to said determining.

Claims 2-3 (Canceled).

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4. (Currently amended): The method of claim 31, wherein said forwarding includes attaching message history information.

5. (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining a communication log of communications sent and received with the knowledge-base system; and
wherein said determining includes ascertaining with the communication log whether a reply detection limit has been exceeded for the client computer.

6. (Original): The method of claim 5, wherein the reply detection limit includes a communication interval limit of time intervals between successive communications with the client computer and a number of communications limits based on a number of communications with the client computer.

7. (Original): The method of claim 5, wherein the communications maintained in the communication log include email communications, web chatting communications, telephone conversations, and personal conversations.

8. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the knowledge-base system and the client computer are operatively coupled over a network.

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Claims 9-16 (Canceled).

17. (Currently amended): A method, comprising:

operating a system configured with a database including a plurality of question-answer sets;

receiving a query input to the system, the query input including a word;

selecting one or more of the question-answer sets with the system in response to the query input by evaluating presence of the word in one or more answers of the question-answer sets differently than presence of the word in one or more questions of the question-answer sets;

wherein said selecting includes scoring the question-answer sets to create a distribution of scores and determining with the system the query result based upon variability of the scores; and

providing an output from the system based on said selecting.

18. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said evaluating includes weighting the answers more than the questions.

19. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said evaluating includes weighting the answers less than the questions.

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20. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising generating one or more word indices, said selecting including referencing the word indices.

21. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said selecting includes scoring a length of one of the questions in proportion to a length of the query input.

Claim 22 (Canceled).

23. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one or more words to ignore.

24. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising alerting a representative when a particular one of the question-answer sets is included in the output.

25. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising:
designating corresponding weights for the word in the questions and the answers; and
wherein said selecting includes scoring each of the questions and the answers using the corresponding weights.

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26. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising defining aliases for at least one word.

27. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one of the question-answer sets to always appear in the output for the query input.

28. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one of the question-answer sets to never appear in the output for the query input.

29. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising proportionally weighting one of the question-answer sets to reduce likelihood of appearing in the output for the query input.

30. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising proportionally weighting one of the question-answer sets to increase likelihood of appearing in the output for the query input.

31. (Original): The method of claim 17, further adding a question-answer set to the database by email.

32. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising:
receiving a message from a client computer coupled to the system;

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determining the message from the client computer was a reply to a previously generated message from the system; and

forwarding the message from the client computer to a representative in response to said determining.

33. (Original): The method of claim 32, further comprising:

creating a response message based on the message from the client computer, at least one of a number of response templates and the selected one or more sets, the system being configured to store the response templates each providing a different response format; and

wherein said providing the output includes sending the response message to the client computer.

34. (Currently amended): A method, comprising:

operating a knowledge-base system configured to store a database formatted with a number of question-answer sets, the knowledge-base system being operatively coupled to a client computer;

receiving an input corresponding to a question from the client computer;

scoring the question-answer sets with respect to the question;

determining a threshold limit based upon said scoring with the system, wherein said determining includes

calculating variability of scores from said scoring, and

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basing the threshold limit on the variability of the scores; and
selecting the question-answer sets with scores above the threshold limit.

Claims 35-40 (Canceled).

41. (Currently amended): A system comprising:

means for determining a message from a client computer was a reply to a previously generated message from a FAQ database and forwarding the message to a representative in response;

means for evaluating question components and answer components of the FAQ database independently relative to an input query; ~~and~~

means for providing a response to the FAQ database query in accordance with one or more response templates, the response templates each relating to a different response format; and

means for selectively hiding words in the response to the FAQ database query,
wherein a hidden word causes an associated question-answer entry to be always
included in the response while the hidden word remains invisible in the response.

Claim 42 (Canceled).

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43. (Original): The system of claim 41, further comprising means for providing an alias designation.

Claims 44-45 (Canceled).

46. (New): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a third email from the client after said enclosing the message identification number in the first email;
determining that the third email was a new message from the client with the knowledge-base system by finding that the message identification number is absent in the third email; and
generating a reply automatically to the third email with the knowledge-base system.

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